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## ABSTRACT

This paper offers a synthesized review of the literature on student peer facilitator programs, in order to investigate and substantiate many of the ways in which peer facilitator programs extend and strengthen a guidance counselor's mission in the school. After an introductory discussion of the foundations and goals of successful peer facilitator programs, the literature review highlights various perspectives and effective practices pertaining to the selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of peer facilitators. The discussion provides evidence of the effectiveness of peer facilitators in extending the school counselor's mission, through a review of exemplary peer facilitator programs. The final section discusses the implications of these findings for school counselors who wish to implement a peer facilitator program. This discussion focuses upon the standards, structure, and guidelines that counselors need to institute for peer facilitators, and also the benefits of a successfully implemented peer program. (TE)

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Peer facilitator programs:

An extension of effective guidance services

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Running head: PEER FACILITATOR PROGRAMS

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Abstract

This paper offers a synthesized review of the literature on student peer facilitator programs. Peer facilitators are viewed as providing a valuable function in extending and augmenting effective guidance services. The author discusses issues pertaining to selection, training, supervision, and evaluation. Implications for the school counselor are addressed.

What sort of human being do we wish to grow?... I suspect that each one of us, from time to time, speculates on the general characteristics of the optimal person. If education were as completely successful as we wish it to be in promoting personal growth and development, what sort of person would emerge? (Rogers, 1983, p.283)

These profound questions raised by Carl Rogers over seven years ago emphasize an important and relevant theme which continues to concern counselors and educators on an ongoing basis today. In addressing such questions, counselors are engaged in reevaluating and revising the philosophical goals, objectives and targeted outcomes of the educational process. In the quest for enlightenment and new directions, counselors are challenging themselves to formulate innovative programs and strategies which can provide positive and influential support in helping students to become the "optimal" people of whom Rogers dreamed.

The person-centered approach has had a powerful impact on the directions being paved towards more comprehensive guidance planning, the primary purpose of which is to foster the growth and development of the "whole person" (Rogers, 1983, p.250). Rogers' therapeutic perspective transmits a clear understanding that wholeness and empowerment of the individual come

through merged learning experiences in both the cognitive and affective realms (Rogers, 1980).

According to Myrick (1987), the primary goals of organized guidance and counseling programs are to help students learn more effectively and efficiently in both of these realms, and the orientation and delivery of services must be both developmental and preventative in nature. Such a tall order necessarily requires the understanding, cooperation, and commitment of many resource people. The ideal situation would be one in which counselors, administrators, teachers, parents, and students are uniting together in a team effort, in which "everyone in the school is considered a facilitator of personal, social and academic growth" (Myrick, 1987, p.16). In efforts to promote the healthy development of young people, what better source to turn to for help in empowering students than to students themselves?

Counselors and others are increasingly acknowledging and capitalizing upon the fact that students are a vital educational resource in our schools today. One of the manifestations of this awareness has been the growing emergence of peer facilitator programs at both the elementary and secondary levels throughout the country (Lynn, 1986). In Maine schools alone, the documented number of peer programs has more than doubled in the past five years to 114 active programs (YWCA

Intervention Program, personal communication, April 2, 1990). Such figures imply that a significant number of our young people are being trained to be the *helping hands* of counselors and teachers - to listen, support and encourage their contemporaries.

School counselors often are hard-pressed to meet all of their students' needs due to the heavy caseloads and time constraints of their jobs (Bowman & Myrick, 1987). In an era of personnel and budget cuts, counselors continually must search for new ways to increase their cost and time effectiveness in reaching out to all students, not just those who are in crisis (de Rosenroll & Dey, 1990). Taking on one more commitment like the training and supervision of peer helpers initially may be perceived as just another added and undesirable burden. "What counselors do not realize is that if they would train kids, then the kids would be going out and they would be helping the counselors in a preventative way, and, therefore, give them more time back" (Carr, Yanishewski & de Rosenroll, 1990, p.26). Ironically, what may appear to be an overwhelming commitment on the surface can provide significant and countless benefits in return. An exciting phenomenon is that counselors are recognizing the far-reaching potential peer helpers have to make positive contributions both to the school and to each other

(Lynn, 1986). In this light, peer facilitator programs may be viewed as an important and necessary adjunct, extension and referral source for the delivery of effective guidance services.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate and substantiate many of the ways in which peer facilitator programs extend and strengthen a guidance counselor's mission in the school. In an era where preventative and developmental programming is called for (Myrick, 1987), peer helpers can serve a vital supplemental function. They may be looked upon as a vital resource in the ongoing search for answers to the challenging questions raised by Rogers in his person-centered approach. A review of the literature will highlight various perspectives and effective practices regarding selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of peer facilitators. Focus will be given to some of the activities and particular issues where peer helping strategies have been proven to make a difference. Implications for the school counselor will be discussed, as well as areas of concern and future directions of the movement.

## Review of the Literature

The concept of students helping students began years ago in one-room school houses when older students were given the responsibility of tutoring younger students in basic skills. As the movement has grown, the helping roles of students have been greatly expanded along with the training and preparation for these roles (Myrick, 1987). Although the term "peer" implies a relationship with members of the same age category, peer facilitators also serve a cross-age population.

What exactly is a peer facilitator? Among other acronyms, the term has been used synonymously with "peer helper", "peer tutor", "natural helper", "PALS" (meaning "peers assisting and listening to students") (Myrick & Bowman, 1983). In the past, one might also have been referred to as a "peer counselor", but a conscious movement away from this label has occurred because of its confusing and potentially threatening connotation, as well as concerns over liability. Effective programs make clear from the start that these students are not carrying out the role of mini-therapists, but instead they may be viewed as healthy, helpful listeners for their fellow students (de Rosenroll, 1988). The term "peer facilitator" was introduced by Myrick to describe more accurately the role and function of young people as

helpers, and he also believed the term would provide enough flexibility to incorporate the variety of functions to be performed. In addition, he believed and substantiated the premise that parents and educators would be less suspicious and more receptive to such a connotation (Myrick, 1987). He defines peer facilitators as follows:

A peer facilitator is someone who cares about others and who talks with them about their thoughts and feelings. Rather than being an 'advice-giver' or 'problem-solver', a peer facilitator is a sensitive listener who uses communication skills to encourage self-exploration and decision-making... No matter the age, the setting or the persons involved, peer facilitators have the same objective: to promote personal growth and development through a helping relationship (Myrick, 1984, p.9).

Goals of the peer movement are based on the premise that peers are often easier to approach than counselors or other adults, more understanding, and more readily accessible. Research indicates that adolescents who are working through developmental issues tend more naturally to disclose matters of personal concern to their friends rather than to counselors or other adults (Morey, Miller, Fulton, Rosen & Daly, 1989). Studies have

concluded that student peers are the most frequently sought-out source of advice and support in a variety of problem areas - problems of a crisis nature, as well as those of normal development (de Rosenroll & Dey, 1990; Morey et al, 1989).

According to developmental theory, peer influence, beginning around age twelve, overtakes all other forms of influence, including parents, school, and the media, thereby becoming the single most important factor in affecting behavior throughout the adolescent years (Myrick, 1987). Adolescents receive much of the approval, identity, direction, and feedback they need from their peer group. This existing natural communication network provides an opportunity for trained peer helpers to connect with students who are experiencing difficulties. Peers are perceived as experiencing similar struggles, and therefore, likely to provide a more understanding and empathetic ear to other students who are in the same situation. Sciacca (1987) stresses that these perceptions place the peers at an automatic advantage over their professional counterparts.

Research indicates that the ethical and legal implications of students helping students must be carefully considered before a peer program can be implemented. Clarifying distinctions need to be drawn

between the helping roles and responsibilities performed by professionals and those which will be carried out by peer helpers. de Rosenroll (1988) reports that the onus is on the professional to ensure that proper guidelines are understood and enforced with regard to competencies, training, confidentiality, and supervision.

Carr (as reported in de Rosenroll, 1988) suggests that a "code of friendship" rather than a code of ethics is appropriate in articulating the peer facilitator philosophy. She states that a friendship code would articulate "...the informal, unstated, situational and variable, but known, practiced and strongly desired..." code upon which natural relationships and communications are built (de Rosenroll, 1988, p.8). Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the code represents peer programming as a corollary of an informal helping approach rather than a corollary of a formal approach.

Successful peer facilitator programs are built on a solid foundation which includes systematic needs assessment, specific as well as global goals, built-in evaluation procedures, and the established support of the community being served (Frénza, 1983). Enlisting strong support from administrators, faculty, students, and parents is considered to be essential in implementing a successful peer program. Through a process of open communication and continuous dialogue,

potential defenses between factions may be broken down. The active involvement of many personnel in goal-setting and ongoing program support are considered keys to success. Those who believe in and support the objectives of a peer program can be instrumental in educating others as to its effectiveness. They also can be relied upon for valuable suggestions and feedback. Myrick's philosophy is that "It's easier to get forgiveness than it is to get permission" (Myrick, speech, Sept. 22, 1989). A cooperative and collaborative effort in establishing and implementing the overall goals and objectives of a peer program is considered ideal (Myrick, 1981).

Specific goals vary according to assessed needs of the school districts being served. Myrick's list of general objectives provides a philosophical basis which targets the general goals most programs incorporate.

I. To Enhance Student Development by improving:

1. communication skills
2. interpersonal relationships among students
3. skills in observing and problem-solving
4. responsible decision-making
5. group leadership skills
6. feelings of self-worth and self-confidence

7. positive attitudes toward self, others, school and community
8. ability and appreciation for helping others
- II. To Enhance the Learning Environment by Providing
  9. timely assistance to faculty
  10. extended guidance services to all students
  11. opportunities for more students to talk about their feelings and be listened to
  12. more situations in which students explore alternative behaviors, natural and logical consequences, and personal responsibility
  13. more systematic approaches that involve students in the learning process
  14. a developmental rather than crisis focus to problem-solving
  15. a source of personal assistance and help within the context of the learning environment.
  16. more opportunities to practice life's learning and coping skills
  17. more situations in which students gain positive recognition
  18. opportunities for students to practice interpersonal skills and develop positive relationships
  19. a learn by doing supervised experience.

(Myrick, 1981, p.54)

Research indicates that once the program's goals and foundations have been laid and promotional advertisements of the peer theme have been circulated, then the components of operation--selection, training, supervision, and evaluation --consequently may be successfully implemented (Frenza, 1983).

### Selection

A review of peer programs offers a wide range of approaches to the selection process. Most programs use a combination of procedures with the expectation of identifying those students who display qualities of caring and commitment, as well as a willingness to work responsibly within the goals and philosophies of the program (Ferrantelli, 1987). Myrick (1987) supports the premise that counselors or other assigned trainers typically are looking for students who tend to possess the Rogerian facilitative skills of empathy, genuineness, and respect for others.

Selection procedures are characteristically designed to obtain information on candidates' levels of human relations skills. Applications, peer nominations, references, recommendations, personality measures, sociograms, and individual interviews represent commonly

used means for obtaining this kind of information (YWCA workshop notes, 1989). For example, in a study on the effects of elementary school peer facilitators on children with behavioral problems, twelve fifth-graders from each of nine schools were chosen by counselors, with assistance from teachers. Criteria for selection included the manifested qualities of verbal ability, intellectual aptitude, motivation, responsibility, achievement, and availability (Bowman & Myrick, 1987).

Myrick stresses in his criteria the importance of selecting those students who are readily accessible, and then he honestly asks himself, "Do I like them?" His tendency is to select initially a small number whom he feels good about and trusts, and as the program moves forward, to recruit more members. Starting with a manageably small number is recommended (Myrick, 1989).

Another approach becoming more frequently used at the secondary level is self-selection. Students may nominate themselves and virtually everyone is accepted, except for those who, through an interviewing process, have been found to be emotionally unstable to the degree that their participation would be detrimental either to themselves or to the program. In Carr's survey of selection procedures (as reported in de Rosenroll, 1988), over half of the respondents expressed in rank order that emotional health was the most important

criteria, applicants should be representative of the schools' subgroups, and consideration should be given to the training benefits for those selected. Group leadership skills, academic performance, and involvement in other clubs or teams were perceived as being of little consequence.

Peer facilitator programs are increasingly being offered as part of the educational curriculum itself. As an example, "Students Helping Students" is a regular course offered for academic credit to juniors and seniors at a high school in Dayton, Ohio. Selection is based on application, interview, and teacher recommendation (Rugh & Bonza, 1987).

According to Myrick (speech, Sept. 22, 1989), many researchers suggest that the selection process is the most critical element in the whole program and that careful consideration must be given to ensure that selection is not perceived as the result of popularity contests. He stresses the importance of trying to recruit students from a cross-section of sub-groups in the school. Regardless of the selection procedures used, students who are chosen as peer facilitator usually consider that they have been given a high honor, one of responsibility and commitment. The position itself carries a considerable amount of prestige in the school.

### Training

Peer facilitator training offers skills and awareness so that trainees' natural communication skills are enhanced and augmented to enable them to be more effective in helping their peers. It provides an opportunity for students to learn more about themselves, to get to know new friends, to develop bonds in a trusting environment, and to practice techniques and skills which will be useful to them both in the course of their everyday life and in their relationships as peer helpers (YWCA workshop, 1989). According to Carr (1989), training should be inspirational, encouraging the growth and development of personal awareness, personal skills, and personal resources. Jorgenson, in answering the question about what kind of training a peer counselor ideally should receive, responds personally by alluding to a sense of community and spirituality. "It has to do with creating connection between one person and another. And while there are practical skills involved in the process, there is a spiritual communion that takes place" (as reported in Carr et al., 1989, p.16). Other researchers concur by saying that peer trainees report a mystique of experience which transcends the factual knowledge transmitted in the learning process (Carroll & King, 1985).

Peer literature supports the fact that the most successful training models combine both didactic and experiential learning, fostering interactions which generate learning in both the cognitive and affective realms (Carroll & King, 1985). The Carkuff model is referred to in most of the peer training literature (Lynn, 1986). Successfully used formats for learning the concepts of the facilitative process often include: (1) introducing new skills, breaking them down into small steps; (2) demonstrating or modeling both effective and ineffective examples of the skill; (3) practicing the skill under supervision with feedback until understanding and minimal competence is achieved; and (4) practicing the new skill with supervision in real counseling situations (Frenza, 1983). A sampling of techniques used involve modeling, role play, lecture, videotapes, observation, brainstorming, and exercises in values clarification and problem solving.

As an example of the format discussed above, Myrick provides the following systematic problem solving model. A volunteer trainee is asked to come up with a personal problem, and then is carried through a series of four questions by the trainer: "1. What is the problem or situation? 2. What have you tried? 3. What else could you do? 4. What is your next step?" (Myrick, 1989). After demonstration, trainees have the

opportunity to practice the model in diads and triads, and to receive feedback from each other and the trainer while in the process of perfecting their problem solving skills. Successful programs emphasize that peers are not trained to solve problems or give advice, but rather to facilitate a climate in which "clients" feel trusted and supported in their efforts to find their own solutions (Morey et al., 1989).

The length and elemental components of training vary considerably, depending upon and in direct proportion to the types of activities in which peer facilitators will be engaged. Anywhere from a minimum of twelve to forty hours of formal training appears to be the norm (Myrick, 1989). Subsequent, informal training and supervision is ongoing. There has been a growing trend towards including an intensive group retreat experience in conjunction with the regularly scheduled peer training sessions that occur during school hours. Along with the training in interpersonal skills, peers receive information about policies, procedures, and organization of the program; ethical and legal considerations, such as confidentiality, the limitations of their role, and sources for support and referral when outside professional intervention is warranted (Frenza, 1983).

In relation to particular program objectives, the literature supports a forum where trainees become actively involved in identifying problem areas in which they feel their helping skills may be put to beneficial use. As they progress in acquiring the skills to become effective in their roles as tutors, special friends, and group leaders, training discussions begin focusing on specific issues and projects within a particular school environment (Myrick, 1987). In an evaluative study of peer programs in Maine, the four most prevalent issues which peer facilitators identified as major concerns to students were depression, difficulties with peer relationships, school problems, and poor communication with family (Cornish, 1988). Effective peer helping activities are generated from the direct needs and assessments of the population with which they will be dealing. Refer to the Appendix for a list of activities in which peer facilitators have provided assistance.

Authorities in the field suggest that one of the vital keys to a successful program is the quality of the person(s) chosen to train and supervise peer facilitators (de Rosenroll, 1988). Those who are sufficiently secure within themselves and their relationships with others, who have gone through an extensive training process themselves, and who are

willing to "facilitate" - not merely teach - are considered to be the most effective leaders. Considering that a pyramid approach is often utilized whereby advanced peer trainees, in turn, assist in training students who are recruited in the future, the professional's responsibility is a significant one (Frenza, 1983). It is evident from current programming that teachers as well as counselors are being trained to fulfill the training and supervisory role. Myrick cautions counselors to maintain a conspicuous involvement in the process even if they are not directly responsible for implementation (Myrick, 1989). As reported in de Rosenroll's centralized training approach (1990), Carr considers peer facilitator training to be a psychoeducational process wherein the techniques and processes are significantly different from both traditional teaching and counseling. The importance of possessing the necessary skills to facilitate group experiences and train students in communication skills is underscored. Carroll & King (1984) consider most training approaches to be the "giving away of psychological skills." Emphasis must be placed on the learning process. In other words, how the skills are taught is more critical than the actual content. Most training philosophies reflect the Rogerian concept of the one in charge as being the "facilitator" of a

learning process wherein the power and responsibility for enhancing intellectual and affective growth are equally shared. Training represents and espouses the features of a cooperative learning process (Hansen, 1988).

#### Peer Facilitator Programs

Evidence of the effectiveness of peer facilitators in extending the school counselor's mission can be drawn by examining a variety of programs discussed in the literature. In reviewing exemplary programs, reference to both the preventative orientation and the developmental perspective in helping relationships is inherent (Anthony, 1987; Bowman & Myrick, 1987; Lynn, 1986).

Myrick believes that one of the major societal issues which made an early and significant impact on the rise of the peer movement is substance abuse. The late 1960's and early 1970's encompassed an era when groups of students began banding together saying, "We want to do something" (Myrick speech, 1989) about the drug problem. Myrick continued with the message students were receiving which was, "Don't trust anyone over the age of twenty-one." Studied evidence that students

would tend to communicate more naturally with their peers than adults became an influential factor in the emergence of student-led anti-drug activities. During that time, training of peer facilitators focused primarily on values clarification and drug-related issues.

Since then, methods used in the campaign against drug and substance abuse have continued to capitalize on the power of the peer influence. In a televised address to the nation's students concerning the anti-drug war, President Bush said:

You know--all of you in a classroom know--who's got a (drug) problem. Today I'm not asking you to get help. I'm asking you to find someone who needs you. And offer to help. I'll say it again: If you're not in trouble, help someone who is.

(as quoted by Hoose in Maine Sunday Telegram, October 29, 1989, p.2D)

Benard's review (1988) of Tobler's meta-analysis study of 143 secondary drug and alcohol prevention programs concludes that peer helping programs represent the single most effective and cost-effective strategy of all for preventing drug and alcohol abuse. In comparing peer programs to other types of prevention strategies, such as information presentations (knowledge only), experiential activities (affective only), and outreach

alternatives, peer programs were found to exhibit a more positive influence on students' behavior than all of the other strategies. Benard cites the power of the peer group as a socializing agent in developing positive behaviors and, in the drug prevention context, he says:

Peer programs = Empowerment = Prevention... While many programs are called 'prevention' that do not empower, there is no better way to insure that prevention is empowerment than to make peer programs--in their truest sense of providing opportunities for meaningful participation and responsibility--the major approach in prevention programs for not only children and youth, but for all groups along the lifespan. (Benard, 1988, p.11)

Results of the meta-analysis study suggest that the critical component of peer programs in helping to prevent substance abuse is the emphasis on peer refusal skills - communication, general assertiveness, problem solving and decision-making. Benard's research supports the effectiveness of peer facilitators in using these skills for a variety of other prevention programs, as well.

In an experimental study, peers were identified as being a useful adjunct to the school's health-care team, as an important source of sexual education (Jay, DuRant, Shoffitt, Linder & Litt, 1984). In testing the effects

of a peer vs. nurse counseling program on adolescent compliance with the use of oral contraceptives, findings showed that the use of positive adolescent role models was more beneficial in helping the at-risk young women comply than if they were counseled by a nurse.

Knowledge alone (the facts about oral contraception as supplied by the nursing staff) was not deemed to be an adequate prevention measure. In providing information, education, and counseling regarding the use of oral contraception, adolescents were perceived as nonthreatening and more frequently able to fulfill a positive and supportive role.

Sciacca (1987) points to the valuable role peer facilitators play with respect to health education in general. He refers to student peer health education as the teaching and sharing of health information, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Capitalizing on the premise that peers often are viewed as more credible sources of information than parents or professionals, he cites programs where peer facilitators have served as useful adjuncts to various health promotion efforts in the schools. He includes in his analysis the report by Botvin on a 20-session experimental program aimed at reducing adolescent smoking, marijuana, and alcohol use. Substantially lower consumption rates were found to occur in students whose intervention program had been

led by peer facilitators, as compared to those who had experienced no intervention at all or had been in groups led by teachers.

Sciacca (1987) provides examples of the kinds of functions peer helpers perform in extending health guidance services to their friends: providing accurate health information (presentations, health fairs, bulletin board displays); acting as role models in challenging mythical beliefs such as "all the popular kids in school drink and use drugs" (p.5); facilitating group discussions; teaching decision-making skills; and providing informal education and referral.

Anthony (1987) reports on a program entitled "Teens Offering Understanding, Caring, and Help" ("T.O.U.C.H."), the goal of which is to encourage adolescents to reach out to each other in a timely and caring manner. Peer helpers are trained as "caregivers", not "cure-givers," to recognize and deal with varying crisis situations and to apply appropriate intervention strategies ultimately aimed at the prevention of adolescent suicide. With the teenage suicide rate up at least 300% in the last two decades, counselors are critically aware of the important role peers play in supporting at-risk students. In educating peer helpers as to the warning signs of crisis and the appropriate sources for referral to specialized

caregivers, the emphasis is "to give teens something to offer their peers who are in crisis, rather than having the unqualified trying to help the unqualified" (Anthony, 1987, p.19). Reference is made to the parents of a teenage suicide victim in Colorado. After their daughter's death, they helped the school organize a suicide prevention program wherein every individual could gain access to trained senior care-givers, and its proponents are adamant that the program works because it saves lives. Ongoing support sessions, communication with outside community resources, and the availability of crisis intervention literature are considered necessary components.

Research at the elementary level supports the contention that the caregiving factor amidst peers is significantly related to social acceptance and academic achievement. From a developmental and preventative perspective, improving social and academic behavior is perceived as a means of avoiding potential crisis and/or drop-out later on. Middleton, Zollinger & Keene (1986) conducted an experimental study on the effects of popular peers' interactions with socially neglected students, defined as those who received relatively few choices on a sociometric questionnaire. Selected peer facilitators from the fifth and sixth grades in four schools were assigned to share with and support

individually identified neglected second-graders in a number of designated activities. Results showed improvement in acceptance of socially neglected students in the experimental group, whereas no significant change occurred for those in the control group. The authors conclude that using peer facilitators in this type of capacity may offer an alternative to the traditional one-on-one session with a counselor, which saves counselor time and also keeps classroom disruptions at a minimum.

Bowman & Myrick (1987) conducted an experimental study using trained fifth-grade peer facilitators to work with younger-aged children who were experiencing behavioral problems in the classroom. Peer-led activities included group discussions on the topics of friendship, sharing, and exploring attitudes towards school. Facilitators also worked individually with their assigned children. Results indicate that intervention from upper grade peer helpers can be beneficial in improving the behaviors and school attitudes of second graders. Bowman & Myrick also emphasize the benefits derived from such a program for the facilitators themselves. The authors' conclusion states, "By drawing on some of the schools' most valuable resources, the students themselves, these programs can enhance positive student attitudes and

behaviors and offer other benefits to students, counselors, and teachers" (p.377).

Lynn (1986) reiterates the benefits to be derived from peer participation by outlining a program at a Baltimore high school. Primary functions served by peer facilitators at Randall High School are tutoring, counseling, and assistance to the guidance office with orientation and registration activities. In terms of career exploration, they assist school counselors by helping students who are seeking information on colleges, career, and financial aid, training tenth grade students how to use the Guidance Information System computer program. Lynn underscores the spirit of positive involvement and shared commitment in the educational objectives of the learning process. He further states that, from the facilitators' own points of view, their training and work are perceived almost without exception as one of their most valuable high school experiences.

### Evaluation

Myrick (1987) indicates that first year peer program coordinators often find themselves regretting that they have not taken adequate time in planning

evaluation procedures to assess the impact of their programs. Looking for the gains of training and project activities and measuring those gains is considered vital to the success of a peer program. Goals of evaluation are: 1) to provide performance feedback to trainers and peer helpers; 2) to assess whether training and implementation goals have been met; 3) to provide data for program improvement; and 4) to provide accountability and credibility which will ensure continued support for the program. Frenza (1983) suggests techniques of evaluating program goals such as pre-post test methods, control group methods, and self-report. In a research study on the perceptions of students regarding peer counseling, Morey et al. (1989) discussed the fact that there was a scarcity of evaluative questionnaires available for assessing high school peer programs. The authors utilized the Peer Counseling Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire (PCCSQ), a 23-item self-report instrument constructed by Morey and Miller in 1987.

Evaluation reinforces what has worked well and signifies the areas where change and new directions may be called for. Tindall (as reported in Carr, 1989) expresses concern about the professionals in terms of their responsible role in evaluation. "Unless the professionals involved in peer helping do ongoing

evaluation, their programs will not improve and they may possibly even be dropped" (Carr & al., 1989, p.13).

Although there are many opportunities to see and hear of the positive influences that peer facilitator programs are making in the schools, leaders in the field point to the necessity of providing measured, tangible results which substantiate the impact.

### Conclusions

Implicit in the above discussion are some of the key components of which a school counselor needs to be aware and to address on an ongoing basis in implementing a peer facilitator program. In light of the evidence that peer helpers are extending and augmenting guidance support services, the ultimate responsibility for the quality and delivery of those services rests squarely on the counselor's shoulders, regardless of whether or not he or she is the actual program coordinator. It is up to the counselor to see that all aspects of the program are well covered and that clarifying definitions exist for the various roles being carried out by peer helpers.

Counselors characteristically wear many hats in their efforts to ensure that their peer programs are successful. At various junctures, a counselor must be

prepared to perform the following functions:  
coordinator, assessment taker, consultant, counselor,  
trainer, supervisor, facilitator, model, teacher,  
resource person, referral source, evaluator, and active  
participant in a cooperative learning process.

If one of the goals of the educational process is to foster a more humanistic climate in which both affective and cognitive learning are to be valued, then the counselor must be an authentic and psychologically whole person. Modeling the facilitative conditions of the helping relationship for peer facilitators and "giving away " the psychological skills entails a sharing of power which involves a risk well worth taking. Under optimum circumstances, this sharing of power can create a positive, rippling effect of empathy, caring and support throughout the school. Implications are that the counselor must thoroughly understand the training process, not just the content of training and specific concepts one hopes to get across, but more particularly, the learning process that peers (and others) go through both intellectually and experientially in learning valuable life skills. How sophisticated that learning process may be depends on the developmental levels of the peers and the population with whom they will be working.

Counselor responsibilities include ensuring that the pre-training, training, and supervisory components are in place. The process involves researching ongoing reputable programs, educating the school and outside community as to the value of peer facilitators, paying careful attention to ethical and legal implications, and locating valuable resource people who may provide continuous support and feedback. In addition, a thorough understanding of the needs of the school population is critical. Being well trained in how to implement a solid program will serve little purpose if a counselor is lacking in substantive knowledge of the developmental needs of the students or of the critical issues affecting the school district being served.

Although the advantages of having a peer program may be easily recognizable, it is vitally important for a counselor to be on the lookout for areas of potential conflict and limitation, as well. Because of the enthusiastic response peer involvement typically receives in a school community, efforts must be made to ensure that a program does not grow too big too fast, or else the capacity to manage it well may fall into jeopardy. High standards, structure, and guidelines in both training and supervision must be maintained or peer facilitators run the the risk of attempting to provide assistance in areas for which they are unqualified, thus

damaging the reputation of the program itself. From another perspective, counselors must try to ensure that the skills and talents which peer helpers have developed are being well used. A successful program includes a variety of opportunities for challenging involvement so that peers' levels of energy and commitment will be sustained; otherwise, frustration and lack of enthusiasm in the peers could cause a program to fall by the wayside. Being a peer facilitator should be fun and rewarding, and counselors need also to guarantee that playful, energy-reclaiming activities are included as integral parts of the program - for the peer facilitators, for the students who benefit from relationships with them, and for the counselors as well.

The benefits to be derived from a successfully implemented peer program are manifold. It provides a unique opportunity to reach out to a greater number of students in a helping capacity, and to target, through peer referral, those who need special attention but are unlikely to seek it themselves. Peer programming capitalizes on an ongoing and natural communication network. Myrick (1987) believes that, ideally, all students should learn how to be peer facilitators. As reported in Carr (1989), Cole says:

We need to have a holistic view of education for our children. If kids feel okay about themselves, they will feel okay about learning. We can't separate the two, so we have to have the support services as an integral part of education. Peer counseling enables students to generate plans and choose, to work co-operatively with each other, to increase their capacity to care and participate in community, to develop a personal set of communication and helping skills, and to develop a capacity to change. These last five concepts are important for all children in our system, so I see peer counseling skills being taught to all kids in schools with those wishing to continue to help becoming peer helpers. (p. 22)

Reports from peer facilitators state that their involvement in the program typically represents one of the most important and meaningful experiences in their school career. Working with peer helpers is considered by counselors to be one of the most varied, positive, and rewarding components of their job. It provides a unique opportunity for personal and professional growth. To help themselves and to benefit the overall school population, counselors must be encouraged to become strong advocates for peer facilitator programs at both the elementary and secondary level.

Implications for future peer research include a need for more comprehensive evaluation procedures to be developed. It is important to formally assess how the public perceives peer programs, with a clear intention of educating those who are still resistant to the concept as to the validity and effectiveness of the movement. Long-range studies of the effects of peer work on the peers themselves and on the student population with whom they work should be encouraged.

In summary, peer facilitator programs represent a unique forum for fostering a climate of caring and support in the school and well beyond. In an era when preventative and developmental programming is called for, peer facilitators provide a powerful component in implementing the goals and objectives of comprehensive guidance planning. As those profound questions raised by Carl Rogers continue to be addressed, it is essential that counselors turn to young people for help in seeking to find the answers.

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Appendix

Peer Facilitator Activities

Adolescent smoking  
Appreciation week  
Al-Anon  
Alateen  
Assemblies  
Awareness programs  
Bike safety  
Brown bag day  
Buddy program  
Bulletin board displays  
Career days  
Classroom behavior  
Classroom presentations  
Co-leading groups with counselor  
Combining peer helpers at elementary  
and secondary level  
Community projects  
Convalescent home visits  
Cooperative learning  
Crisis intervention team  
Dial-a-Friend  
Dropout prevention

Appendix (cont.)

Drugs and Alcohol  
Eating disorders  
Elementary friend - one day per week  
Exchange students  
Friendship club  
Group leader  
Handicapped children in PE  
Homeroom discussion groups  
Hot lines  
Individual tutoring  
Integrative theater  
Kids-R-Safe  
Loss  
Mediators  
Newcomer's club  
One-on-one support  
Orientation  
Panels and skits  
Peer support groups  
Person of the week  
PLAN (planning leisure activities now)  
POPS (Promoting school spirit)  
Rap room  
Registration

Appendix (cont.)

Resource room assistant

SADD

Secret pal

Self-awareness days

Self-awareness groups

Shower program

Special service classes

Special service friend

Socially neglected children

Team teaching elementary, secondary

Decision-making

Communication skills

Drugs/alcohol

Friendships

Problem-solving

Self-esteem

Teen pregnancy

Training for other peer helpers

Training for staff and parents

Weight reduction

(YWCA peer facilitator training project manual, 1989)